

# Primary languages in initial teacher training

A good practice  
guide for providers

The TDA is committed to providing accessible information. To request this item in another language or format, contact **TDA corporate communications** at the address below or e-mail: [corporatecomms@tda.gov.uk](mailto:corporatecomms@tda.gov.uk). Please tell us what you require and we will consider with you how to meet your needs.

## Training and Development Agency for Schools

151 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SZ  
TDA switchboard: t 0870 4960 123

**Publications:** t 0845 6060 323 e [publications@tda.gov.uk](mailto:publications@tda.gov.uk)

[www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk)

© TDA 2007



*developing people, improving young lives*



*developing people, improving young lives*

# Contents

- 03** Introduction
  - About this guide
- 06** Expectations for those involved in primary languages training
- 08** Setting up the programme
  - Course administration
  - Recruitment to your course
  - External marketing
  - Internal marketing
  - Interviewing applicants
- 10** Course design
  - Frameworks for primary teaching
  - Practical aspects of teaching primary languages in schools
  - Government initiatives - the policy context
  - Primary languages pedagogy and strategies
  - Trainees' language competence
  - Additional information
  - Assessment
  - Time allocation in centre-based training
- 14** School experience
  - Length of time abroad
  - Recruitment of trainees into employment
  - Selecting and briefing placement schools
  - Information pack for the placement abroad
  - Accommodation
- 18** Working with European partners
- 20** Preparing schools for trainee primary languages placements
  - Preparing host staff in English partnership schools for home primary languages trainees
  - Preparing host staff in English partnership schools for European primary languages trainees
  - Involving non-specialist trainees in primary languages
  - Suggestions for linking your specialist languages provision and the mainstream

# Introduction

The purpose of a primary languages programme in initial teacher training (ITT) is to provide primary schools with teachers who are well equipped to teach foreign languages through an integrated curriculum.

Since 2001 the TTA/TDA has given additional funding to providers to develop a specialist model of primary languages in ITT. The additional premium funding is to support an extended experience in school in the relevant EU country to enhance pedagogical and cultural awareness. This funding is intended to support those who have English as their first language and who will benefit from the development of their language skills.

It remains an option for all providers to offer primary languages as a specialism as part of their mainstream provision without the extended stay, as in France, Germany, Spain or Italy. This option is more appropriate for potential specialists who have existing strong skills in the relevant language or who are native speakers.

ITT providers have been developing specialist provision for the teaching of primary languages in response to the national languages strategy (NLS) since 2001. In this time, they have enhanced and refined the way they deliver their courses, and there has been an increase both in the number of providers involved in the programme and in the number of trainees. Bilateral partnerships have been set up between training institutions in European countries in order to provide school placements for trainees.

Ofsted inspected and reported on the quality of the programme in 2002/03, as delivered by the original group of providers in the scheme. Key findings were:

- The trainees recruited to the specialism are of a high calibre.
- All trainees completing the courses can teach MFL at least satisfactorily and most do so well or very well.
- They use a good variety of suitable activities to make their lessons interesting. However, although the

## Introduction

standard of their French is perfectly adequate for teaching primary-age pupils, many lack a range of strategies to use the language consistently in the classroom and to foster its use by pupils.

- Most trainees do not have sufficient opportunities to assess and record pupils' progress in French.
- The effectiveness of the specialist MFL course units is affected by the overall structure of the general primary training course in which they sit. Where the specialism is well-integrated, there are clear benefits for both training in the specialism and for the generic training. Where the specialism is more isolated, trainees' progress as MFL teachers is less good.
- Although trainees are usually placed in schools which provide good general primary training, there is wide variation in the level of specialist support they receive, from schools where MFL is well-established in the curriculum to schools which have no experience or expertise in the subject.

- The French exchange programme works well, on the whole, and there are clear benefits for the trainees, particularly in terms of increased fluency and confidence in the language. Although the reciprocal visits are well organised, more could be done to take full advantage of the opportunities they offer to trainees. Furthermore, in most providers the time required to manage the exchange has been seriously underestimated, and too much of the subject tutors' time and energy has been consumed by low-level administrative tasks.
- Tutors' final assessments of trainees as primary MFL teachers are accurate, and providers are developing a means to give recognition to trainees' achievement in the specialism. However, because there is limited time for MFL subject leaders to teach and manage their specialism, and because so many placement schools have little or no specialist MFL expertise, formative assessment of trainees as MFL teachers is unsatisfactory.

A further inspection in 2006/07 will build on the outcomes of the 2003 report and will explore the implementation of the key stage 2 (KS2) framework for languages.

## Introduction

### About this guide

This guide for providers is designed to help you, your partnership schools and your European partners maximise the effectiveness of your primary languages provision. It is based on evidence collected from all the ITT providers in the programme and will help you reflect on your provision. You will find it useful to read it alongside the Ofsted overview report *Primary languages in ITT* (available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm)), which captures issues that all providers should consider.

The model of provision offered in this document is a guide only, and you will clearly wish to adapt certain aspects of the content. It is important that your primary languages programme enhances and extends the core training that your trainees will receive in the primary curriculum. Participation in the primary languages programme is voluntary, but if you sign up to the programme and receive the 'premium funding' for your trainees then certain additional expectations (see opposite) have to be met.

This guide will help you ensure that your trainees improve their own language skills in order to use them confidently within appropriate contexts, and are able to teach the language to children at KS2. To do this effectively:

- you should negotiate an appropriate language teaching experience for your trainees in your partnership schools, which must also be well versed in the KS2 framework for languages
- you should assist your partnership schools, where necessary, in developing the expertise to support your trainees fully.

Finally, this guide will help you evaluate how the primary languages programme fits in with your general ITT course design.

## Expectations for those involved in primary languages training

Trainees who specialise in primary languages must meet all the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) in the first instance. In addition, they must fulfil the requirements of the primary languages specialism. The core of this is that they spend four weeks teaching the full primary curriculum in the target language, as well as English as a foreign language, in a European primary classroom. 'Target language' means the language that the trainees will specialise in teaching at KS2, and therefore the language of the country in which they will spend the required four weeks.

You must ensure that the following requirements are met; they apply to all European trainees involved in the intergovernmental exchanges of training. (Note that the term 'host teacher' is

used throughout this document to refer to the class teacher with whom a trainee is placed; 'host tutor' is used rather than 'mentor'.)

The intergovernmental agreement states that:

**R1** - The common reference framework (CRF) should be used by all English trainees on placement in European partner classrooms and by English host teachers in English schools receiving trainees from European partner institutions.

**R2** - Appropriate linguistic, pedagogical and cultural preparation must be given to the trainees before they take up a school placement abroad.

**R3** - Trainees must have a full understanding of the KS2 framework for languages and how it is delivered in the primary classroom, and they must demonstrate that they can teach a foreign language in their final school experience.

## Expectations for those involved in primary languages training

**R4** - Providers must make all host teachers aware of the expectations required of the trainees by their home institutions. They must ensure that host teachers are familiar with the location of the four-week placement abroad in the overall teacher training programme of the trainees' home institution, and that they understand the procedures for the formative assessment of progress towards teacher training qualifications in the trainees' home country.

**R5** - All providers in England and in European partner teacher training institutions must supervise progress in these expectations.

# Setting up the programme

## Course administration

The 2004/05 independent survey by TDA consultants of the quality and parity of primary languages provision across ITT primary language providers indicated that providers who run multiple primary languages programmes are most successful when a team is set up to work coherently together, with one person nominated as the coordinator for each partner country. So, for example, a provider with programmes in French, German and Spanish will have one member of staff working with Germany, one with France and one with Spain.

The coordinator would normally be a linguist with a very good knowledge of general primary pedagogy and a good cultural knowledge of the partner country. In addition, it was strongly recommended

that there should be a primary language administrator to work with all the country leaders.

Single language provision ran smoothly when there was one named coordinator for the language programme. It appeared to make no difference whether or not this person was a linguist, as the trainees received linguistic input from other parts of the programme. Strong administrative support to the primary language coordinator was also vital. Dialogues with providers in 2005/06 repeatedly reinforced these findings.

ITT general staff with foreign languages (FL) specialists

+

good administrators

= smooth running of the course

One full-time academic acting as a primary language coordinator

+

specific leaders for each country

= very smooth running of the course

# Setting up the programme

## Recruitment to your course

Finding good quality candidates for your primary languages programme is vital. You will need to market it actively and take steps to identify applicants who, firstly, will make excellent primary teachers and, secondly, can complement their general expertise with very good primary languages teaching skills.

## External marketing

Advertise your primary languages programme in your institution's prospectus. Send out information leaflets to all your partner institutions, primary schools, specialist language colleges, local authorities and any other parties in your area, such as local businesses, who might be interested in supporting primary languages in your partnership schools. You can also insert these leaflets into the ITT information packs you send in response to enquiries about the programmes on offer.

## Internal marketing

Audit the current cohort of trainees on your undergraduate ITT course (if this applies to your institution) to gauge the level of language competence already available to you and to establish how many trainees might be interested in taking up the primary languages specialism.

## Interviewing applicants

Consider including an element of target language speaking in the interview, and involve colleagues from partnership schools in the process. You could also ask applicants to write a short and simple text in the target language to form an idea of their writing skills. The language tutors working with the trainee can use this as a baseline assessment of the trainee's language skills when designing individual training programmes.

# Course design

## Course design

The following sets out some of the key components providers need to build into the design of an appropriate primary languages training course for your trainees.

### Frameworks for primary teaching

It is essential for all trainees to know about government policies such as the NLS and entitlement, as well as the KS2 framework for languages and how to use it. They need to know the new Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme of work linked to the KS2 framework for languages. It is central to their preparation for the classroom that they know how to plan for assessment for learning in primary languages. This entails knowledge of assessment instruments such as the languages ladder/asset languages and the European languages portfolio.

### Practical aspects of teaching primary languages in schools

Trainees should be familiar with government measures to promote collaboration and partnership between specialist language colleges, local authorities, advanced skilled teachers (ASTs) and primary schools. It is useful for them to know how to be a subject leader in primary languages so that they are in an informed position to introduce primary languages if the situation presents itself. Being a subject leader also means delivering, or at least knowing how to obtain information to deliver, continuing professional development (CPD) and in-service training to other members of staff in schools.

Trainees should also be familiar with published schemes of work and with other information and resources such as the National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning (NACELL) website and the National Centre for Languages (CILT). In addition they need to consider KS2/3 transition and continuity.

### Trainees' language competence

By the time they go on their school experience abroad, trainees should be at level B1 of the European framework. The additional linguistic up-skilling of trainees, especially those on undergraduate courses, should include familiarity with the professional language they will use while working in schools abroad. The common reference framework (CRF) is very useful in the development of education-specific language. Trainees may also feel less anxious if they have spent some time on subject-specific terminology and phraseology. This can be done by looking at the national curriculum requirements of the host country, which can usually be downloaded from the internet. Alternatively, your bilateral partners should be able to assist in obtaining the appropriate documentation.

### Primary languages pedagogy and strategies

Trainees need to acquire strategies that will enhance their confidence before they are asked to teach in the classroom on school experience in England, and certainly before they go abroad for their four weeks' placement. These include peer teaching and micro teaching. Trainees should be culturally prepared, particularly on essential aspects of primary education in the host country, and know how to make cross-curricular links and content and language integrated learning. This knowledge will also prepare them to use the KS2 framework for languages in their teaching of primary languages in English classrooms.

Providers need to give specific focus to the appropriate use of resources for planning primary languages teaching (short, mid and long-term), including joint planning with host teachers. It will also be beneficial to their four weeks' placement abroad if they have had experience of teaching English as an additional language and of involving bilingual learners in language work.

## Course design

### Time allocation in centre based training

The allocation of time for primary languages training needs to be carefully planned. The number of allocated hours will vary greatly from one provider to another, depending on the design of the ITT course. However, the TDA quality survey carried out in 2004/05 indicated that most providers allocate between 30 and 40 hours teaching time per year, not including tutorials and independent study.

The average, including all aspects of the course, input from tutors and independent study (but excluding the four weeks abroad) is 80 hours.

Directed input

+

independent study

+

tutorials

= 80 hours during the year

### Assessment

The assessment of the primary languages component of the course must fit with the way the primary languages specialism is placed in the general ITT course your institution. If it is a modular course, then it will be assessed as all other modules on the ITT course. If it does not form an integral part of the ITT course (there are a few cases of such a model) we strongly recommend that you design a discrete assessment procedure for it, in addition to your institution's requirements for passing the ITT course. Schools recruiting these trainees will then have evidence that they are of a sufficient standard to teach primary languages at KS2. All assessment models need to include criteria for assessing the content and delivery laid out in the KS2 framework for languages.

To assess the four-week placement abroad, use the guidance in the current CRF covering the relevant bilateral agreement.

## Course design

### Additional information

Providers may have specific areas of expertise or interest to enrich the preparation of trainees for primary languages teaching in a unique way – for instance, by the use of bilingual stories, or creativity in teaching primary languages through drama and art.

Contact cultural institutions and consulates of the target language country to find out about courses or resources available for trainees in primary languages teaching. Several embassies and consulates are very active in promoting the teaching of their languages in English primary schools.

## School experience

During their school experiences both in England and abroad, trainees should carry out a range of activities and have access to a range of training opportunities.

Institutions taking part in the primary languages programme across England have devised a number of models for school experience. However, it is helpful to subdivide the school experience component of the course into three blocks. The great majority of primary languages trainees go abroad in the spring term after a first schools experience (SE1) in England. After the placement abroad (SE2), they complete their languages training in their final school experience (SE3) in England.

### SE1

During this SE block, trainee specialists should carry out primary languages-related activities in negotiation with the partnership school. For example, they should join in the school's language club, if one exists, carry out an enquiry of languages spoken in the school, and so

on. Some schools, in negotiation with the training tutors, may ask the trainee to begin some language teaching as soon as they feel confident to do so.

### SE2

Refer to the CRF for guidance on what is expected of everyone – trainees, training institution tutors and host tutors/teachers – during the four-week placement abroad.

### SE3

During SE3 all English trainees specialising in primary languages must have the opportunity to teach their target language as part of their timetabled curriculum teaching. ITT tutors must ensure that placement schools are fully prepared for trainees to do so and, if necessary, training institution tutors should train the school-based tutors in observation and assessment of primary language teaching. Assessment should be in accordance with the institution's assessment criteria for any specialism course.

## School experience

### Length of time abroad

All trainees should experience a four-week (20 working days) placement in a school abroad, during the spring term in postgraduate courses and in the final year of undergraduate courses (sometimes the penultimate year during four-year courses). The design of courses should allow trainees, while they are abroad, to comply with this specified time for school experience, and allow time for assignments set by their home institutions and all the necessary independent study.

In European schools, where the school day is structured differently from that in England, or where the school closes for half a day, the following formula should be used:

$$\begin{aligned} 1 \text{ day} &= 5 \text{ hours} \\ 20 \text{ days} &= 100 \text{ hours} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, over the whole four-week period abroad, trainees should spend 100 hours on school experience. You also need to ensure that trainees spend all the statutory days in overseas schools as required by the country's regulations.

### Recruitment of trainees into employment

Inform local authorities of your course, and of the times when your trainees will be abroad, to ensure they are not excluded from any NQT employment pools.

Ensure that LAs are aware that the trainees have fully covered all the requirements to achieve QTS, with the additional bonus of high level linguistic skills and an understanding of the pedagogy to ensure a quality delivery of the KS2 framework for languages.

### Selecting and briefing placement schools

The 2004/05 quality survey indicated that a major factor contributing to a successful school experience in England, both for home and European partner trainees, is the selection of the placement school.

Use schools that timetable primary languages into their curriculum. Schools must be able to offer high quality placements, with opportunities to observe



## School experience

primary languages in action and to teach primary languages. It will be helpful to carry out an audit of primary languages placement schools (and other local schools that may not have been used in the past) to gauge their provision of primary languages and how they are implementing the NLS.

Encourage placement schools to contact their local authorities and specialist language colleges in order to familiarise themselves with any local initiatives relating to primary languages and to bring in any expertise that is available to support the trainees.

Language teaching must comply with guidelines offered by the KS2 framework for languages: that is, the target language should be used in the routine management of the class, and there should be some cross-curricular focus as well as discrete primary languages lessons.

When placing European trainees in English partnership schools, ensure that they will have sufficient opportunities to teach other curriculum areas in English prior to

their tutors' visit/assessment (both host tutors and those from the trainees' home countries). Aim for a distribution of teaching time across the curriculum.

During their school experience abroad, trainees must not be used as foreign language assistants. It is your responsibility to ensure that host teachers and their schools are familiar with this part of the intergovernmental agreements.

### Information pack for the placement abroad

The 2004/05 quality survey indicated that a second important factor contributing to successful school experiences is the preparation of trainees by the training institution. Before your trainees go on their four-week placement abroad, ensure that they are fully informed about the school they are going to, travel arrangements, and accommodation. As a minimum, the information pack you give them should contain:

- the name, location and contact details of the placement school

## School experience

- contact details of named tutors and emergency contacts
- details of accommodation (see guidelines below)
- travelling distances and arrangements (to the town abroad, and within the town from their accommodation to the school)
- travel information (availability of public transport and where to buy tickets)
- information about school timetables abroad
- information about the school curriculum abroad
- information about the class in which they will be placed, and
- the names of the teachers with whom they will work.

It is a good idea to exchange trainees' biographies/CVs, including a photograph, with your partner tutors abroad before the placement takes place. If there is time available, trainees should begin to make contact with their host teachers.

### Accommodation

Arranging accommodation for your trainees when abroad, and for guest trainees in this country, can prove a difficult area. Trainees need to have realistic expectations of the kind of accommodation they are likely to be given. As a guideline, the minimum requirements are:

- a single room, or shared with one other at most, with en suite WC/washroom or having access to WC/washroom shared with as few others as possible
- adequate working area, with a desk in the room
- access to telephone and internet (not necessarily in own room)
- access to cooking facilities, or suitable alternatives, and evening meal facilities.

Other points to consider are the pros and cons of accommodating trainees together, alone, with host families, or in pairs. You should also find out about access to library facilities or sporting/recreational facilities, and whether any documentation/ID is required.

## Working with European partners

Establishing good working relationships with partners abroad also contributes significantly to a successful placement for everyone.

In preparing to receive trainees from your European partners, you should obtain essential information and documentation (in translation if necessary) from your partner tutors about the ITT programme and formative assessment procedure of the trainees' home country, its education system, culture and ethos. By giving the host schools in England as much information as possible about the trainees' educational and cultural background, you will make the placement a more fruitful experience for all concerned.

This information will also enable you to prepare your own trainees to use the CRF within the educational ethos of the host country. For example, when they are setting their own objectives in the CRF before they go abroad, you can advise them on how to address objectives on lesson planning, since the approach to teaching and learning (which informs lesson planning) may differ considerably from one country to another.

Your European partners will benefit by having the same information from you to prepare for your trainees taking up placements abroad.

## Working with European partners

The table below summarises the basic requirements for achieving successful placements.

Working with European partners	
Exchange of documentation (in translation)	Essential to prepare trainees and host class teachers and to assess trainee
Understanding ITT	Essential for trainees and host class teachers to understand each other's educational background
Understanding primary languages	Useful for trainees to understand the role of primary languages in children's education in the host country
Understanding culture and pedagogy	Essential for trainees and host class teachers to appreciate why teaching and learning are different and/or similar
Preparation of trainees prior to placement	
Education system of partner country/countries	Important for trainees to have some knowledge of the host education system, at the very least knowing the national curriculum in general terms (information easily downloadable from the internet)
Pre-placement contacts	Essential for trainees and host class teachers (see information pack for placement abroad)
Classroom language	Essential that trainees' language competence is at level B1 of the European framework prior to school experience abroad

## Preparing schools for trainee primary languages placements

If both trainees and the host teachers working with them are to have a successful school experience, it is essential that host teachers and/or tutors are well prepared.

### Preparing host staff in English partnership schools for home primary languages trainees

Host teachers and/or tutors working with specialist primary language trainees should be trained in observing language teaching and assessing it according to the specifications of each provider. Of particular importance is the observation and assessment of the trainees' linguistic and cultural competence and the way in which they monitor pupils' ongoing language learning: for example, how they give feedback to pupils and whether the pupils are engaged. The trainees should also be monitored and assessed on their planning, which must include the primary strategy *Entitlement and enjoyment*, the

KS2 framework for languages, and the *Every child matters* initiative.

### Preparing host staff in English partnership schools for European primary languages trainees

All partner institutions participating in the scheme for primary languages four-week placements abroad are bound by the intergovernmental agreement to work together on the principle of reciprocity. This is nowhere more vital than in the preparation of the partnership schools to receive overseas trainees. You are responsible for preparing host teachers and/or tutors in your English partnership schools (and will expect your counterparts in Europe to do the same to prepare their schools to receive your trainees).

Host staff need to appreciate the emphasis placed on the school experience abroad, to understand the aims of the four-week primary placement in general terms, and to see how it fits into the ITT of the visiting trainees and their education system.

## Preparing schools for trainee primary languages placements

Host teachers should be trained in use of the CRF. They need to understand (as do host tutors) that visiting trainees must integrate into the daily life of the school (bearing in mind that quite significant differences may exist between the school organisations in the two countries). They must provide opportunities for the trainees to participate in activities such as assemblies, break duties, curriculum, pastoral duties, parents' evenings and writing reports.

Everyone in schools hosting trainees from abroad must be sensitive to cultural differences, such as handwriting, use of symbols (for example, the mathematical symbols for long division and multiplication are used differently in some countries), timetable expectations, general requirements upon trainees in terms of observing lessons, delivering language lessons, and delivering other curriculum areas in the target language.

With appropriate cultural and professional sensitivity and respect, bilateral partners should agree together to implement the specific requirements of the CRF for the

preparation of host teachers. In particular, the partner tutors need to focus on how the mentoring, coaching and training of the guest trainees is to be structured. Some relevant details may include whether trainees are likely to be working with more than one host teacher for different subjects, as sometimes happens.

In addition, English providers need to ensure that their trainees are familiar with and confident in their understanding of the CRF before they go abroad, so that they can be proactive in its use if necessary.

## Preparing schools for trainee primary languages placements

### Involving non-specialist trainees in primary languages

It is good practice to develop strong links between your primary languages provision and mainstream ITT. One possible way is by providing information sessions on primary languages for non-specialist primary trainees and their tutors. Or non-specialist tutors might give specific input on areas of study that converge: for example, 'professional attitudes' and 'professional skills' (see the revised standards for 2007/08), or comparing the educational ethos of one country with another. More suggestions are listed below.

By 2010 all newly qualified primary teachers must be familiar with the primary languages entitlement. You are therefore required to inform all ITT trainees about government language policies and the way they are being implemented. Of particular importance are the NSL, the KS2 framework for languages, language learning in the classroom in England and abroad, cross-curricular links and content,

and language integrated learning. All trainees should know about national language-related organisations, projects run by language colleges and local authorities and the role of ASTs in primary languages teaching and in delivering CPD in schools. Your experience and knowledge developed in the context of the primary languages programme will enhance your general ITT provision in all of these aspects of the primary curriculum.

## Preparing schools for trainee primary languages placements

### Suggestions for linking your specialist languages provision and the mainstream

There are a number of things you can do, such as:

- arrange for trainees from specialist languages courses and those on a generalist route to exchange information in joint seminars and tutorials
- ask language specialist trainees to deliver presentations to generalists on various aspects of their training and give their findings on their four-week placements and cultural educational differences/similarities
- invite teachers (language specialists and non-specialists) from previous years to speak to current trainees (both generalists and specialists) about their training and the arrangements for primary languages in their schools and local authorities
- ask European trainees on their four-week primary placements in England to address an entire cohort about primary teaching in their country
- offer a 'French for fun' taster course to generalists, using the CPD courses available on the DfES training zone and C ILT websites.
- invite individuals or organisations directly involved in implementing the primary languages strategy in your area to give a talk at your institution, eg. local authority representatives, language coordinators in schools or local authorities, language ASTs, language colleges and other secondary schools involved in supporting hubs of primary schools.